

Chapter One: Growing up a Squib

McGonagall opened the Listing book and tapped the page where all the names of Hogwarts' future students were written.

Muttering a few words, flicking her wand in an eight pattern followed by a slash, she tapped it again and two stacks appeared, one of letters and one envelope

One by one, she signed the standard accepting letters before placing them in envelopes with the student's name on it.

She enjoyed this task as it allowed her to reminisce about past students as their children were now starting Hogwarts.

“Bones... Amelia was such a good child, so hardworking...”

“Granger... a Muggleborn, I need to send someone to clear the situation with the family.”

“Longbottom... such a tragedy, his parents were such dears...”

“Malfoy, I can just hope he will not follow his father's example, such a dreadful man... Narcissa was such a lively little girl... quite the pity, she turned into such...”

“Patil... twins, I just hope they won't be as troublesome as the Weasley duo. Their father was quite bright, always handing twice the length I asked for essays...”

“Weasley... Merlin, one more! How much children did Molly get?! Let's just hope this one will be more like his older brother than the twins... I think Molly also has a younger girl... What a brood!”

As she sealed the last envelope destined to Zabini Blaise, she let out a sigh... It looks like this year group would be quite the lively one, in particular since the young Potter...

She paused, mentally going over all the names she had seen for the past hour.

Frowning, she leafed through the stack of letters... Parkinson Pansy, Patil Padma, Patil Parvati, Randall Ian... Thinking she might have made a mistake while conjuring the letters, the Deputy Headmistress, looked in the book.

Her eyes widened as nobody named Potter was registered.

She tied the letters to the legs of the owls waiting by the window as they did every year before shooing them away. Once all the birds had left, she took the book and strode to the Headmaster's office.

“Albus?” she asked, knocking at the same time.

“Enter, Minerva, enter.”

She did so and went to sit in one of the chairs in front of the Headmaster.

“Is something the matter, Minerva?”

She dropped the book on his desk and opened it to the offending page, motioning him to read it.

The old wizard did so, frowning as he reached the end of the list.

“Well Minerva, it seems that we will have a fine group of first year, what has you so ruffled?”

Minerva looked at him with disbelief.

“Albus! Don’t you notice a name missing?!”

Frown deepening, Albus Dumbledore went over the list once more, his finger stopping at the P letter.

“Where is young Harry’s name? He should be eleven this year?...”

“Exactly,” exclaimed McGonagall, I checked the book, his name is nowhere in its pages!”

Dumbledore stood up and went to take his cloak.

“The book must be malfunctioning, or the wards on his aunt’s house might be interfering with its magic,” he said, trying to find a viable explanation to this situation.

“Where are you going, Albus?”

“I think it is time to pay a visit to young Mr Potter. His re-entrance in our world should be as smooth as possible.”

Minerva frowned.

“Do you mean that you never checked on the boy, Albus. You know what sort of Muggles his family is.”

Albus smiled benignly at his Deputy.

“It was for the best that young Harry had no contact with our world. Yearly visit to the same Muggle family would have raised suspicion. Not all Death Eaters were arrested and sent to Azkaban.”

Minerva sighed.

“I’m sure you did what was best, Albus. I’ll come with you.”

Dumbledore nodded.

“Of course,”

Ten minutes later, they reached the Apparition point and apparated to a small alley close to Privet Drive.

Walking calmly to number four, they rang the door, waiting for someone to open.

The door was opened slowly and they looked down to see a small skinny black-haired boy looking up at them, his eyes widening as he took in their strange clothes.

He was dressed in over-sized washed clothes that only accentuated his thinness. His angular face made his eyes stand out by their colour, despite the thick black bangs obscuring his face.

Albus smiled at him.

“Hello, my boy.”

The young boy bowed his head.

“Hello sir, what do you want?”

“I would like to talk to your family, are they home?”

The child only opened the door wider, inviting them inside. He walked them to an immaculate living room where everything seemed to have its place.

“Aunt Petunia, Uncle Vernon, there are two people who wish to talk with you.”

A thin, blonde woman stepped in the room, paling as she saw who was standing in her living room.

“Go to your room boy and do not come out before I tell you to or I’ll have Vernon punish you.”

“Yes Aunt Petunia.”

The black-haired boy hurried to the hall and opened the door of the cupboard, shutting it behind him.

Petunia ignored the appalled look on the strict looking woman.

“What do you want?!” she snapped, not caring about politeness, not with those freaks.

Albus chose to ignore her tone.

“Could we sit down, Mrs Dursley?”

Petunia, waved at them dismissively, seating herself primly in one of the armchairs.

“We came here to day to try to solve a small mystery concerning your nephew,” started Albus. Waiting for questions that did not come as Petunia looked at him, distaste and annoyance clear on her face. He decided to continue. “As you are aware, young Harry will turn eleven in a week and should receive an admittance letter to our school. However there seemed to have been a problem since his name did not come up on our admittance list.”

At those words, Petunia’s eyes lit up, hope entering them.

“And what does that mean, old man?” she asked snidely.

“I’m sure it is just a problem with the protection that were placed on your house the day you took little Harry, but I would like to make sure by testing the boy.”

Petunia looked at him, narrowing her eyes before shouting a high-pitched “Boy!”

The same thing black-haired young boy hurried in the room.

“Yes Aunt Petunia?”

“These people came to do a little test on you. Stand still and let them do their work.”

Young Harry nodded and turned to face the two weird people that were looking at him surprised.

Albus Dumbledore was the first one to react.

“Come here, child,” he said, motioning to the boy to approach.

Looking to his Aunt for permission, Harry then stepped closer to the couch.

He nearly took a step back as the man took out a small crystal from his pocket and placed it over his heart and started muttering some gibberish.

A pale dying light lit the crystal, before fading.

A look of stunned surprise crossed the man's face as he muttered his gibberish again, getting the same results. Taking out a thin carved stick, he waved it in front of Harry.

The young boy gasped and nearly jumped out of his skin as a thin pale green light surrounded him. It disappeared as the man uttered two more words.

"Finite Incantatem." He then turned towards Petunia Dursley who had watched the whole display with a sneer firmly fixed on her face.

"Could you send young Harry back to his room, Mrs Dursley?"

"You heard the man, back to your room, boy!" she barked.

The boy left the room quickly, his eyes stuck to the ground.

"So, does the brat fit your freak school?" she asked.

"Unfortunately, I'm very sad to tell you that young Harry won't be able to join Hogwarts."

That silenced the woman who looked at him with a stunned look.

"What?!"

Albus sighed.

"I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, Mrs Dursley, but it seems that young Harry's magic was stripped from him, probably the night his parents died. He is what we call a squib, quite like you. You both possess very small quantity of magic, not enough to be able to use them."

There was a small silence as the women digested the information.

Minerva McGonagall was ashen. It couldn't be! Harry Potter had defeated Voldemort! He couldn't be a Squib!

Petunia on the other hand seemed to relax slightly, a pleased light entering her eyes.

"You mean that the boy is completely normal? That he is not one of you?"

Albus nodded eyes dim. How was he going to explain this to their world! Harry Potter was supposed to be their saviour, an icon for the Light! He was not supposed to be a Squib.

"He is as normal as any Muggle. I'm sad to say that he will never be able to enter the wizarding world. To know of magic and to not be able to use it when he had been able to at an early age would be cruel to him. It is best that he never knows of his parents' world."

Petunia smiled gleefully.

Dumbledore didn't notice this as he kept looking at his hands, trying to make something of this new element.

"So what are you going to do about it, wizard?"

Dumbledore sighed.

"I will lift the wards from your house since the boy does not risk being spotted through magical means, having too little magic to be tracked by spells. You will have no longer any contact with our world and young Harry will make a life of himself in the Muggle World, I'm sure. I will allow you access to the money his parents put aside for his education. You will however have to justify any withdrawals made from it and give justification it was made in little Harry's interest."

He stood up, followed by Minerva.

“We will no longer impose on your hospitality, Mrs Dursley. I wish you a good life.”

The two wizards headed for the door and vanished from view, leaving the quaint little Muggle neighbourhood behind them.

Petunia sat down once she was sure the two freaks had left, feeling quite dizzy at all that had been said.

The boy, her nephew was normal!

Her sister had to be rolling in her tomb! Her perfect baby boy had no more power than her, Petunia!

However if the boy wasn’t one of those freaks, it meant that there would be some changes in the house. While it was perfectly normal to treat a freak like one, it wouldn’t do to do it to a non-freak.

She steeled herself for what was coming.

“Boy!”

The skinny waif-like child hurried in the living room.

“Yes aunt Petunia?”

She eyed him appraisingly. He would need some fattening up, and new clothes. Her little Dudders’ old clothes might have been good enough for a freak but not for a perfectly normal nephew.

“Sit down, boy.”

He eyed her warily and went to sit on his stool.

“No, boy, on the couch.”

This time he looked at her as she had gone mad but obeyed nonetheless.

“Do you know who those people were, boy?”

He shook his head meekly.

“No Aunt Petunia.”

“They were two freaks,” she stated coldly. “I know your Uncle and I told you your parents died in a car crash, however the truth is that they were also two freaks that were killed by a more powerful freak who wanted to get control of the freak world.”

The young boy’s eyes widened at that before he timidly asked a question.

“What are freaks, Aunt Petunia?”

She sneered.

“Freaks are called wizards and witches, they can use magic to get things done for them, lazy bums, the whole lot!”

The boy was gaping at her.

“M-Magic?”

She waved him dismissively.

“Go to the attic and bring me the large black box I forbade you to touch.”

A few minutes later, the young boy was back with the box.

Petunia opened it and took out a stack of moving pictures.

“Those are photos your mother took while she went to her freakish school. This box contains what she left behind when she left us to stay in that World.”

Harry was staring mesmerized at a moving picture of a young woman dancing in the arm of black-haired man.

Petunia continued her explanations.

“There was an even bigger freak in that world and he killed your parents and tried but failed to kill you apparently. You were then dumped on our doorstep.”

Harry looked up from the picture.

“Why did you tell me they died in a car crash?”

Petunia sneered.

“My wonderful sister turned her back on me after a year or two at that school. Suddenly I wasn’t good enough for her. They took her from me. Vernon and I had decided long ago that we wanted nothing to do with this world. We just used the first explanation that seemed plausible.”

“So I-I’m not like my parents?”

Petunia huffed.

“Thank god no! You are perfectly normal and that mean we can treat you like a normal boy. You will move to Dudley’s second room and we will go shop for some clothes as soon as we can. Dudley will also share your chores from now on. You will be allowed to watch the television with us and eat at the table during all the meals.”

She paused, trying to think of other things that needed to be changed.

“I will explain everything to Dudley and there will be no more hunting. Hunting is only for freaks. I also expect you to do your best in school as Vernon and I will not support you all your life, you’ll need to make a name for yourself.”

Young Harry could only nod as his world was turned upside down. Being normal looked like it was way better than magic. After all normal people were allowed to be in a real bedroom and to have three meals a day!

“Go clean Dudley’s second room. Put all the broken things in a plastic bag and the rest in his room. Once you are done, we will go shop for some clothes and furniture.” Looking at him she also decided something else needed to go. “We will also go see an optometrist for new glasses.”

The day the two strange people visited the Dursley residence marked a turn in young Harry Potter life.

He was dressed in clothes that fitted him, owned his own room, and wore glasses that did not make him look like an owl.

His Uncle and aunt bought him the necessary furniture: a bed, a desk a chair, a nightstand, a small lamp, an alarm-clock, a rug and a large wardrobe with four big drawers.

He also received decent school furniture: a school bag, books, notebooks, pencils and pen, erasers... and was allowed to get better grades than Dudley.

Being able to perform at his best soon made him part of the top five best student, all the time spent hiding from Dudley in the Library finally paying off.

His cousin took to ignore him unless he needed help with his work. This relationship worked best for the two boys.

Came Halloween and Harry had started to integrate himself to the children of Privet Drive, though he still remained quite shy.

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Far away from Privet Drive, in Scotland, a young girl screamed in terror as a huge troll barged in the bathroom where she had been hiding, crying over the harsh words of one Ronald Weasley.

But there was no one to come to her aid, the teachers arrived to find her lying on the ground, unconscious, blood pooling around her, the projections on the wall showing how the beast had thrown her around.

They managed to subdue him as it was about to smash her with its bat.

She spent two weeks in St Mungo's intensive care then two months recovering from her ordeal and getting herself back to health.

Ronald Weasley got a detention and twenty points off his house for his behaviour and the house as a whole got a hundred points off for having not signalled Miss Granger absence from the Hall when the alert had been given.

When asked if she wished to go back to Hogwarts, young Hermione Granger refused, deciding to go back to the Muggle world, turning her back on a world that had only ridiculed her for her thirst of knowledge or scorned her due to her heritage. She was allowed to keep her magical belongings though notice-me-not and muggle repelling charms were placed on it.

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Meanwhile, young Harry Potter had been transferred to a prestigious boarding school. His aunt and uncle had decided it would be better for all of them. It had taken quite a lot of money and private meetings with the Head Teacher to manage to enrol the boy but they had managed.

They would not have to try as hard to making their awkward relationship with their nephew work as he would only be there during the holidays and he would be able to escape the rumours that ran rampant about him.

At the end of December, he sat the entrance exams to the school and was admitted. Came January, he was shipped to his new school.

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As the summer holidays approached, the Grangers decided that a change of scenery would be good for their little girl and looked over the brochures for boarding schools, discussing it with their daughter.

They filled application forms to three of them and drove her to sit the admission exams to the three schools. Once positive results had come back for the three of them, they finally settled on one and got ready for the new school year, buying her the required uniform and necessities...

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Harry Potter got ready to leave for King Cross station, checking his bags to make sure he had not forgotten anything.

His summer had been enjoyable, his relatives having come to a decision as to how to treat him. They treated him like a distant relative that was only staying for the holidays which suited both parties well.

After bidding his aunt and uncle goodbye, he walked to the train and headed to the wagon that school reserved for those that couldn't be driven up to the school's estate.

A girl was already seating there. He didn't recall her from before and assumed she was new. Deciding to do what others had done for him on his admission to the school, he saluted her.

"Hello, I'm Harry Potter."

He heard a small gasp as the brown-haired girl looked up sharply.

"W-What?"

He frowned a little.

"My name is Harry Potter, what's yours?"

He watched her eyes look up at his scar before she snapped from whatever daze she had been in.

"Sorry, your name just sounds familiar. My name's Hermione Granger," she said, shaking his hand.

He smiled at her.

“So you’re a new student, I don’t recall you being at school last year?”

“I am. I went to a Boarding school last year but was attacked and decided to transfer.”

Harry fell silent at those words.

“I’m sorry, what was the name of the school?”

“Don’t be, I wasn’t well liked anyway.” She paused for a minute, debating whether to tell him her former school’s name. “It was Hogwarts.”

Harry’s eyes widened.

“So you were a witch!”

Hermione paled.

“You are The Harry Potter! They said you disappeared!”

Harry frowned.

“What do you mean?!”

“You mean that you don’t know?”

“Don’t know about what?”

Hermione sighed.

“You’re right, I was a witch, but there was an attack and I got caught in it because no one saw fit to warn me of it or the teachers that I didn’t know... I was stuck in the hospital for three months to recover. After that I decided I was better in the Muggle World. But what about you, why didn’t you go to Hogwarts?”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“Apparently I can’t do magic... From what my aunt told me last time I asked her, I lost it the day my parents died.”

“So you’re a Squib then...”

“If you say so. However from what you tell me, it seems I got lucky, the wizarding world doesn’t sound all that great.”

Hermione looked out of the window.

“There were some good things...”

“But not enough to outweigh the bad ones apparently.”

“Not in my case.”

She shook her head, dismissing those memories.

“So what can you tell me about the school?”

Harry immediately launched into a description on the facilities, eventually joined by some of his friends and acquaintances from school to whom he introduced Hermione.

That was a new start for Hermione as she was accepted without reserves for the first time.

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“Come on Harry, just open the blasted letter! I’m sure you got in!”

Harry kept staring at his Oxford letter.

Hermione rolled her eyes and snatched it from his hands.

“Here, you big lazy lump! How difficult it is to open a letter?”

“Hermione! Give it here! It’s my letter!”

“And if I let you do it, we’ll still be here when hell freezes! You know you’ll get in!” she snapped back.

“Easy for you to say, not everyone has the IQ of a genius,” grumbled Harry.

Hermione ignored him and neatly opened the letter. She skimmed over the contents of the first page, watched by an anxious Harry.

There was a moment of silence when Harry felt his inside turned into ice before she squealed and hugged him tightly.

“You got in!”

He hugged her back and twirled her around the room laughing in relief.

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“I’m going to kill that pig-headed bastard!”

“Hermione!”

The young women flushed a little but didn’t relent.

“That- that waste of human flesh had the audacity to steal my research subject and then asked me to dinner!” she spat, throwing her bag on the couch before slumping in an armchair.

Harry stood up and went behind her, lightly massaging her shoulders.

“Relax, Hermione, you’ll find another subject.”

She sighed as her friend worked out the knots in her shoulders.

“He just gets on my nerve. Because his Dad is on the board he thinks he owns the Department... Where are the others by the way?”

“Kelly is getting ready for her date, Dave is out with some friends and Will is studying in his rooms.”

As he said that, a brunette stepped out one of the rooms.

“Good to see you out of your labs, Hermione. I was starting to think that your corpses had kidnapped you.”

Hermione rolled her eyes.

“No risks. However, there might be one more corpse in the morgue tomorrow.”

Kelly chuckled.

“Harrington strikes again I see. I’ll leave you in Harry’s hands then, I’ve got my own boy to catch. Don’t wait for me, I might stay at his flat,” she said, laughing at the exasperated face both of them made but left before they could say anything.

Hermione shifted a little as Harry kept massaging her shoulder.

“What’s for dinner?”

Harry smiled.

“It was Kelly’s turn to cook.”

Hermione shot up in her seat.

“Tell me you didn’t let her in the kitchen!”

Harry laughed.

“I was back too late. She had already finished what she says is mashed potatoes and carrots with steaks.”

Hermione groaned.

Harry leaned and whispered at her ear.

“However should you agree to come eat with me tonight at Pierre’s you might be spared the steaks of doom.”

Hermione turned to him.

“Anything but that! If you do this I’ll be forever in your debt.”

“You got yourself a date then, Miss Granger.”

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Hermione was hunched over thick books, trying to cram one last bit of knowledge in her brain.

The click of her door opening had her looking up.

“Hey you,” she said, smiling at her friend.

“Still working, I see,” said Harry, placing a mug of coffee next to her while sipping on his own. “Be careful it’s hot”

“I can see that.”

“You should take a break. You know all of this by heart anyway.”

“A bit more studying will not hurt.”

“But a break might make your mind sharper, in particular if you enjoy this coffee prepared by your humble servant.”

“True and it would be a shame to let such a good coffee go to waste.”

Harry shot her a smile as she took a sip of the steaming mug.

“I see what you meant when you said it was hot.”

Harry wriggled his eyebrows.

“Want me to kiss it better?”

Hermione flushed a little. She knew she shouldn't think like this of her childhood friend, but he had been flirting with her for the past week, unless she had misinterpreted his actions through wishful thinking. He was attractive but he was also her best friend.

She looked at him, catching him staring at her.

Sighing, she put her mug back on her desk.

"Do you really mean it, Harry?"

He frowned a little.

"What?"

"Kissing it better?"

He raked a hand through his hair.

"I know we are great friends, Hermione, but I would like to be more. But since I know you don't want to jeopardize our friendship, I'll settle for some light flirting..."

She snorted.

"Light? Your light flirting would make a hippo look thin!"

Harry shrugged.

"Well, at least you noticed it."

There was a small silence broken by Hermione.

"What would you say if I told you I wouldn't mind giving it a try?" she said quietly.

Harry put his mug down, face serious.

"I would ask you if you would mind me doing this."

He gently cupped her face and kissed her lightly on the lips, deepening the kiss as she opened her mouth to let him in.

He soon pulled away; looking in Hermione's smiling eyes.

"I think I like it," she said in a whisper.

Harry smiled kissing her once more before standing up.

"I'm glad you'll give us a try, Hermione. I'll leave you to your work now."

He kissed her on her forehead before leaving her room.

Hermione knew she must have a silly grin etched on her face but couldn't bring herself to care.

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Harry opened the door to his flat, trying to find the Light switch while balancing his bag and the bags of food he had bought on his way back.

He heard a muffled groan and shushing noise and had to repressed a smile

All of the sudden, the flat was lit.

"Happy Birthday!"

He stared at his friends with a smile. A large banderol was going from one side of his flat to the other, sporting a big emerald green "HAPPY BIRTHDAY HARRY!"

All his friends, some of his co-workers and of course Hermione were gathered tonight at their flat, A big cake was being lighted as he watched them surround him, congratulating on reaching his 24th birthday. The night was one of happiness, laughter and shared jokes pertaining to Harry's youth and mishaps. Presents were opened and commented on and the cake was eaten.

As the guests started leaving, Hermione went to sit next to Harry, snuggling up to him.

“Happy Birthday, Harry,” she whispered, kissing him chastely.

Harry embraced her.

“Thanks for organizing this.”

“My pleasure, as long as you enjoyed it.”

“I did,” he said, taking her hand in his, a hand that was wearing his ring. He waved at the last guests that were leaving. “How are your parents? Did they enjoy their time in New York?”

“They did, they even had time for some sight-seeing after their congress. You’re invited tomorrow for dinner by the way.”

Harry smiled, kissing her forehead.

“I’ll be a fool to pass up your mother’s cooking.

“I told them we would there around noon.”

“Alright, did you tell your mother about our plans?”

Hermione shook her head.

“No, I thought we would tell them together.”

“Very well. How was your work today?”

She smiled.

“Fine, there wasn’t too much work fortunately... though there was one strange case today, the man and his family seemed to have died of fright. All three of them were perfectly fine, no wounds, no malformations of any sort, and no signs of poisoning, though the laboratories will confirm it... It’s quite strange.”

Harry nodded.

“There were other cases of such deaths. One of my colleagues had to oversee one of them but it’s quite the mystery.”

“A serial killer?”

Harry kept carding his hand through her hair.

“Maybe, the police are still investigating all those deaths and I heard from Darren that a special unit might be detached to help.”

Hermione snuggled up to him as Harry put his arms around her.

“Are you working tomorrow?”

Harry shook his head.

“No, Judge Hordane gave me my day off from the court.”

Hermione smiled.

“Salute him for me next time you see him.”

“I will, he told me his wife was expecting us for lunch next Sunday.”

Hermione smiled, then kissed him gently and soon both were otherwise occupied.

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Chapter 2: Mysterious deaths and Past coming back

About a year later, those mysterious deaths had increased in frequency and the media had got wind of it. It had been front page news for about three months.

Harry came back to the flat he now shared with Hermione exhausted. He had been promoted six months ago and put in charge of this affair along with three other judges. He had just come back from a meeting with the coroner and various officers involved in those cases.

“Harry? You’re back?”

He saw Hermione’s head appear at the kitchen’s door, an apron tied around her waist, some flour on one of her cheeks.

“Yeah, though I thought I was about to fall sleep at the office.”

“The Phantom’s case.”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“Yes, though we’re not getting anywhere. There is nothing, no trace, no evidence that the houses attacked where broken into, the alarms weren’t tripped, the locks weren’t picked, there is no blood, no wound, no poison at least none detected by our laboratories... but you know that since you’re one of the forensic pathologists doing the autopsies for us. Those cases are a nightmare.”

“What about those experts?”

“There should be a meeting in a week, you’ll probably be invited too, there will be a dinner afterwards so we can and I quote ‘learn to know each other’...”

“Tsilman, I suppose?”

“Was it your first guess?” retorted Harry with a smile.

Hermione swatted him with a large wooden spoon.

“Go change, dinner should be ready in a few minutes.”

Harry saluted and hurried to their bedroom, changing in more comfortable clothes before heading back to the kitchen and setting the table.

“And you? How was your night shift?”

“Busy. There were four more bodies linked to the Phantom.”

“The Camerons?”

“Yes, their children were so young...”

Harry took her hand in his.

“This killer will make a mistake at one point and we’ll catch him.”

“I know, but how many more deaths will it take?”

“Too many, I fear, those guys are pros.”

“Are?”

Harry nodded.

“Yes, we were able to find this. It’s likely that a gang is responsible of all those murders. However we cannot yet find a link between all the families killed. A few of them had kids that went to the same school. But that’s hardly a cause for murder. Their choice seems completely random.”

There was a small silence before the alarm of the oven rang in the kitchen.

“I’ll get it,” said Hermione. They sat down at the table and ate in comfortable silence.

As they both readied to sleep, they discussed quietly about their upcoming wedding, Hermione's parents and other things. As they lay in their bed, Hermione snuggled into Harry's side.

"What's wrong, Hermione?"

"Just a feeling, Harry. This Phantom's case is doing nothing for my nerves..."

"I'm sure everything will turn out fine, Hermione."

She placed her head on his chest.

"You're right, but I can help but worry, something will happen."

Harry traced soothing circles in her back, trying to reassure her the best he could. A few minutes later, her breathing had evened out but Harry took more time to get to sleep, worry keeping him awake.

A week passed quietly, as the work toll on the two of them increased as well as the pressure on their teams. The meeting with the expert team was set up earlier than expected and so that was why Harry and Hermione were gathered in a room along with thirty of their colleagues that were also implicated in those cases.

They were quietly discussing among themselves when the door opened and a smartly dressed man stepped in.

He coughed loudly to get everyone's attention.

"Your attention please, I'm Matthew Carrington, head of the Special Division. Before I tell you more, you will have to sign a confidentiality contract. I will pass the forms around. Those that do not wish to sign will have to leave."

Whispers broke throughout the room as the forms were passed around. Hermione felt anger rise in her as she read the form and finally understood what was going on.

Reading carefully trying to find any loophole or hidden meaning, she was finally satisfied that it was only a standard Secrecy form and signed her name, followed by Harry.

Carrington gathered the signed forms, nodded and spoke in a small microphone on his wrist.

Minutes later, five strangely dressed people stepped in, escorted by two guards.

“Very well, everything that will be said here will not leave this room, but I will let Mr Weasley explain the situation,” said Carrington, motioning to a red-haired man, dressed in what looked like dark green night robe.

“Hello, my name is Arthur Weasley. I was sent by the Ministry of Magic to explain the strange events that have been occurring recently.”

He was not able to say more as the room exploded in a cacophony of yells, outraged cries and demands for explanations. Only Hermione, Harry and two other people remained calm, waiting for the others to settle down.

Finally a dark-haired man waved a wooden stick, muttering some gibberish and silence fell on the room. People were still talking given their moving lips, but no sound was heard.

Weasley shot a reproachful look at the man.

“Really Henry, that was uncalled for.”

Blue eyes starred unrepentantly at him.

“We don’t have time to loose in nonsensical blabber, Arthur. So get on with the explanations.”

The red-head rolled his eyes and continued.

“As I was saying, I and some of my colleagues here work for the Ministry of Magic. This is Henry Culligan, Unspeakable first class, something like your secret agents. Next to him is Nymphadora Tonks, Auror or as you say a policeman, then Minerva McGonagall, Transfiguration teacher at Hogwarts and finally, Andrew Tiptaddle who will be your liaison to our ministry.” He took a breath then started on his explanations.

“To start with, I’ll have to state the obvious, meaning that Magic is indeed real. To better make my point, we will all demonstrate some of our skills.”

With that said, he transformed a plastic glass into two teddy bears that started dancing the tango. A stern-looking woman transformed into a cat then back into a human. A man levitated a chair and the police officer standing on it then put them back on the floor while a fourth turned himself invisible and the fifth changed from a violet-haired petite woman into a tall blond model.

Weasley nodded to his colleagues.

“I trust this will be enough to convince you that magic is indeed real. Henry if you would lift your silencing spell please.”

The black-haired man rolled his eyes and waved his stick once more.

Whispers broke out in the room before Hordane spoke up.

“So magic is real, alright, good. But what does it have to do with our cases?”

“Everything Mr...?” answered the Henry man.

“Hordane, judge Hordane.”

“Those murders have been committed by a gang of magical people calling themselves Death Eaters. They are led by what we call a Dark Lord, a wizard of above the norm power. One of the main ideas of his propaganda is the death of all Muggles, meaning non magical people, as well as the deaths of Muggle-borns, meaning witches and wizards

born to Muggles and Half-bloods or their enslavement at the very least.”

A lieutenant snorted in the back.

“Sounds like we’re about to meet Darth Vader...”

Harry had to repress a smile.

The man did not stop his explanations.

“The murders you have been investigating were done by Death Eaters and the victims were killed by one of the three Unforgivable curses: the Avada Kedavra. It’s the killing curse. Only one person has been known to have survived this curse, probably thanks to the blood magic his mother invoked as she was killed. To all others, as soon as you’re hit by it, you’re dead.”

“And how long has this Dark Lord of yours been acting?”

The red-haired man sighed, eyes downcast.

“He was resurrected ten years ago through a dark ritual.”

A small silence fell on the room.

“You mean that this man has been running freely around the world for ten years and you only saw fit to inform us now? After what you told us about his ideals?” snapped a smartly dressed woman, her dark eyes glaring daggers at the wizard.

“Miss...”

“Mrs Lawson, profiler.”

By the clueless look on the man’s face, you could see he had no inkling of what a profiler was.

“Mrs Lawson, our Ministry didn’t immediately believe in the announcement of the Dark Lord’s resurrection, in particular when he

kept a low profile for the following five years... It was only when the attacks started that measures were taken."

Harry rolled his eyes. Politicians!

Lawson nodded, scribbling a few things on her notebook before speaking up once more.

"You said he was resurrected, does that mean you managed to kill him before."

Weasley shook his head and motioned to the Henry man to speak up.

"In a way. He attacked a family on Halloween 1981 because of a prophecy that might have implicated their son. He killed both parents. We think the mother managed to perform some blood magic on her son because when he cast the killing curse on the one-year-old baby, the curse rebounded and left him little more than a wandering spirit. He sustained himself by possessing animals and occasionally Muggles before his men managed to resurrect him through a ritual."

"What of the baby?"

Henri shrugged.

"He was sent to the Muggle relatives of his mother. When it was time for him to start magical school, it was discovered that he had seemingly lost his magic during the attack and he was then left with his relatives. Why?"

"It might have been interesting to find if traces of the... magic his mother had invoked could be found to know what she did."

"She didn't fully succeed," stated Henry.

Lawson's lips thinned.

"I understood that Mr. Cullingan, however that's what research and development is about, researching, creating and modifying," she snapped back.

William Hordane placed a hand on her arm.

“Calm down, Sally, I’m sure Mr Culligan didn’t mean anything, did he?” he added shooting the man a pointed look. The black-haired man muttered something that looked like apologies after being nudged by Weasley. “However,” continued the old judge, “I’m interested in the reason behind this meeting. You don’t seem to want to reveal magic to the world so why telling this to us?”

Weasley sighed.

“Given the numbers of attacks, we had no choice but to warn your Minister of the real cause. Sooner or later you would have found something that might have led you to our community and it was thought better to inform you before such a thing took place. Moreover, it is thought that a different regard on this issue might be helpful to the war against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.” All the Muggles looked startled by the name.

Matthew Carrington stepped in.

“The name of the Dark Lord is not spoken by any wizard or witch. His real name is Tom Marvolo Riddle. All information that our department managed to find about him are in the files in this box. They were spelled to be only read by those in this room, to everyone else it will appear as a file on a break-in in London. He took on the nickname of Voldemort.” As all the wizards shuddered, some of the Muggles had to repress a snort. “You can see that his very name strikes fear in the wizards so I let you imagine the terror he is spreading in the magical community.”

A CIA agent spoke up.

“That is all very good, but as you said they are magical, they have those powers... How are we to be able to protect civilians against murderers that can pop wherever they want and kill with a flick of a stick and some gibberish words?”

“Several wizards will work with our Research and Development department to try to come up with ways to protect agents and civilians. They will also work with us to try to find a pattern in the killings and try to predict his next moves.”

The following hours were spent talking about the data that the wizards had brought. Both Harry and Hermione remained silent, a fact noticed by many of their colleagues, as were their stony faces.

Harry looked at his watch and racked a hand in his hair, sighing.

He did not notice some of the wizards paling and staring at him as if he had grown a second head. Weasley had stopped speaking mid-sentence, slack-jawed as he stared at the scar on his forehead.

Carrington frowned.

“Mr Weasley?”

“I-I can’t believe it! H-Harry Potter?”

Carrington’s frown deepened as Harry only raised an eyebrow.

“How do you know Judge Potter, Mr Weasley? I don’t think you were introduced to all those present...”

Meanwhile some of the wizards were whispering among each other, words like ‘Boy-who-lived’ and ‘Potter’ repeating themselves.

“Mr Weasley?” repeated Carrington more sternly.

“I-I... please, excuse me. But it is so... unexpected... I never....”

“Mr Weasley!”

The stern looking woman cut in.

“You do remember the baby that Mr Culligan talked about regarding He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named’s fall, Mr Carrington?” Upon seeing him nod, she carried on. “Mr Potter was that baby.”

All eyes turned to Harry that was looking coldly at the wizards. Carrington looked unsettled but quickly composed himself.

“Indeed... it is surprising but quite welcome. Mr Potter will be then better suited to work with Mr Tiptaddle.”

Harry coughed.

“Forgive me, Mr Carrington, but while I will do all I can to help with those cases, I would like to have as little contact with the wizarding world as possible.”

Carrington’s eyebrows shot up.

“Very well... your request will be taken into account, Judge Potter.”

Weasley’s eyes were about to bulged out of their orbits.

“But you are Harry Potter! You are the Boy-Who-Lived!”

Harry looked coldly at him.

“And I am a Squib, Mr Weasley. Someone your world looks down upon with shame. Some families even used to kill them at birth I heard. Forgive me for wanting little to do with a world that cast me aside and refused me my parent’s legacy for something that was no fault of mine.”

Judge Hordane sent a small smile to his protégé.

“Matthew, it’s been quite a day and we have covered the basis of this cooperation already. I think it would be good to end this meeting so all of us can sleep on those revelations...”

Carrington nodded.

“You are right, William, before we retire, I would like to know those that would like little contact with wizards. While we all want your help

with those cases, we do not want to create situations were conflicts might be created.”

Everyone looked at each other before Hermione held up her hand.

“Miss Granger?” surprise tainted Carrington’s voice since the young woman was one of the most open-minded people he knew. “Any particular reason?”

Hermione looked at the wizards coolly, only relaxing when Harry took her hand in his.

“I do not wish to have to work with people that are linked to the attack that nearly killed me when I was eleven and enrolled in Hogwarts, Magical school.”

Mr Weasley and McGonagall’s eyes widened.

The elder woman sighed sadly.

“We were all very sad to have you leave the school, Miss Granger. You were one of our more promising students.”

Hermione shook her head.

“I was glad to leave, Mrs McGonagall. The wizarding world never gave me a chance. I was just the know-it-all Muggleborn that was not worth much. So insignificant that professors weren’t even warned by the members of my house that I was missing when a beast was let loose in the school and nearly killed me.” She added bitterly.

“Miss Granger, I- It was an accident,” stated Mr Weasley, now remembering the incident as his son had been involved.

“An accident indeed, Mr Weasley. One that nearly cost me my life.”

Carrington coughed.

“That will be enough, Miss Granger. We will be taking your request into account. Any others?”

Two more people made themselves known before the meeting came to an end. People started to stand up and talking quietly among themselves as they put on their coats.

William Hordane approached Harry and Hermione.

“Harry, Hermione. Would you agree to eat with Mary and me tonight? She has been hounding me to invite you again so she can discuss your wedding with her.”

Harry looked at Hermione who nodded.

“We’ll be glad to. I’m for one, is not going to refuse Mary’s cooking. I assume you’re not going to that dinner?”

“And have to listen to Tsilman for the whole night, thanks but no thanks, my boy. So I’ll tell her to expect the two of you around 8?”

“Yes, thank you, do you want us to bring something?”

William smiled.

“Well if you’re asking, then I wouldn’t mind you bringing one of your bottles of that Cherry wine.”

Harry let out a small laugh.

“We will, we’ll see you tonight then.”

Harry took Hermione’s arm and headed for the doors, they were however stopped by Mr Weasley.

“Mr Potter, I-”

Harry held his hand up.

“I believe I made myself clear, Mr Weasley. I mean you no disrespect, but I wish to have as little contact with your world as possible.”

“But it’s also your world, Mr. Potter, the world of your parents!” exclaimed the older woman, McGonagall.

Harry narrowed his eyes.

“It’s funny I thought that Squibs had no place in your world.”

“You’re the Boy-Who-Lived, it’s your duty to-” snapped Culligan.

Harry cut him.

“My duty is to this world, my fiancée and the court. I owe you nothing.”

“No see here Potter!” snapped the man, grabbing his arm as Harry had turned to leave. Two of the lieutenants still present were immediately on him, holding him away from Harry.

“What do you think you are doing?!” snapped Carrington, obviously annoyed.

“Trying to make this Squib understand what is at stake! Our world has been at war for ten years and he might be the key to He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named’s defeat. I won’t have my world reduced to ruins because a mere little Squib is holding a grudge!”

Carrington turned to Harry.

“I apologise, Judge Potter. I will see to it that you will have as little contact with them as possible.”

McGonagall looked about to say something but decided against it, a sad and disappointed look in her eyes. She was going to talk to Albus. He would know what to do.

The five wizards were escorted outside by some of Carrington’s agents who kept a close eye on Culligan.

Matthew sighed, raking a hand in his hair.

“My apologies again, Judge Potter,” he said tiredly.

Harry waved his hand.

“Think nothing of it, Agent Carrington. My fiancée told me how difficult and close-minded wizards can be.”

Carrington nodded.

“I couldn’t have said it better myself. However your links to the Wizarding world in particular Doctor Granger’s could be a huge help to us. With her permission I would like to temporarily pull her out of the morgue and have her join the Research and Development unit.”

Hermione frowned.

“Wouldn’t that makes me work closely with them?”

Carrington shook his head.

“If you can come with me to my office, I’ll be able to explain things more in depth.”

The ‘and not be overheard’ was implied but both Harry and Hermione understood it clearly.

A few minutes later, they were sitting in Carrington’s office as the Agent tidied his desk.

“Since you already know of the Wizarding world, I can explain some more things to you. Our Prime Minister was contacted two weeks ago through the usual channel between our worlds and was apprised of the situation. I can let you imagine that he was not pleased that we had been kept in the dark for so long since those killings are not helping his government in the slightest.”

He paused gathering his thought.

“The Minister of magic, Scrimgeour, who had been elected in place of the former one, was not in favour of cooperation. Had he had his way,

we would have remained happily ignorant of everything until they either solved the problem or it blew to their faces. Our Minister was quite adamant that a unit was created to research way to counteract Magic and destroy that man. It was only when he made it a prerequisite to any talks of alliance that the wizards agreed to have experts met with ours to come up with new ideas.”

Carrington sighed deeply.

“They have been meeting only for a week but I can already say that it is going to be a disaster. The wizards do nothing but look down on our technology when they aren’t down right refusing to work with us, saying that Magic just can’t be explained by any of our science and just is. We already had to pull out Dr Elliston on his demand.”

Hermione nodded pensively, not that surprised by this news. From the little time she had been in the magical world, she had been able to grasp how caught in itself it was and how stagnant the society was.

“That’s where you come in, Dr Granger. We, well, I hope that you will be able to help our world’s expert on a side research unbeknownst to the wizards.”

Hermione frowned.

“I quitted Hogwarts before I could even finish first year schooling and was 11, Agent Carrington. I don’t think I will be of much help to you.”

Carrington shook his head.

“You could help us more than you imagine. You are magical and your IQ tests show us that you are well above the average. You wouldn’t be alone. We have gathered a few other Muggle-Borns that chose to leave the Magical world upon finishing their schooling. You are known for thinking out of the lines, Doctor Granger, you would be an asset to that team.”

Hermione looked at Harry who silently made her understand it was her decision and he would support it.

“Can I give you my answer in a few says. I need some time to think about.”

Carrington nodded, knowing not to push his luck.

“Yes, I can leave you until next week before I’ll need a definitive answer. I’ll be available should you need more information.”

Hermione smiled and stood up, followed by Harry.

“That will be fine, Agent Carrington. You will have my answer by next week.” She took his hand and gave it a firm shake, followed by Harry.

“I will endeavour to keep them away from you, Judge Potter. Should they harass you, just inform me of it and proper measures will be taken. This is my phone number should you need to reach me.”

“Thank you, Agent Carrington,” answered Harry taking the piece of paper before bidding the man a good evening and following Hermione outside. They both quietly walked to the underground car-park and climbed into their respective cars, both driving back to the flat they shared using different routes.

Harry couldn’t help feeling that he was being watched. He shook it off as paranoia from having met the people that had discarded him that easily. Hermione’s car was already parked when he arrived. He got out, closed the door and headed for the residence’s doors.

They were both lucky to have been able to find this flat. The neighbourhood was nice and quiet. The residence building had been built only a few years ago, making it quite modern. The flat was quite large and well lighted. All in all worth the price they were paying for it.

Tapping his code number, he then took out his keys and opened the second door after having checked that there was no mail waiting.

Two stories upwards and he stopped in front of a door with a cat-like door mat in front of it. Smiling, he unlocked the door and entered.

“I’m home,” he said loudly while putting his coat on the rack and taking off his shoes.

“I’m in the kitchen.”

Harry’s lips quirked upwards.

He entered the kitchen and saw her looking into one of the cupboard.

“Harry, where did you put that biscuits box you bought last week?”

“Right cupboard top shelf.”

She moved to the next cupboard and took out a big metallic box and placed it on the counter.

“Good, I’ll go change, when do we leave?”

Harry looked at his watch.

“Mary and William are expecting us at 8. We should leave in about half an hour.”

Hermione smiled.

“Good, I’ll be quick about it.”

Harry nodded absent-mindedly.

“I’ll change too and wait for you in the living room.”

“Alright.” She went to the bathroom to start getting ready.

Harry went to put on a pair of black pants, a light blue shirt under a charcoal grey V-neck pull. He then left his room and went to sit down in front of the television, shifting from one channel to another. He settled on a news channel and listened distractedly to it.

The Phantom Case as it had been dubbed by the media was again making the head titles. With a sigh, he shifted channels once more

and settled on a report about some kind of bird in Africa. The off-voice had barely gotten into the feeding habits of said bird when Hermione finally came out of the bathroom.

Harry looked at her with a smile as she walked to the entrance closet, pulling out a pair of black heels then started to lace them.

“You are beautiful, Hermione.”

She shot him a smile.

“Thanks. You like the dress then?”

“I do, though no more than the woman wearing it.”

“Flatterer. Don’t forget to take the wine and the biscuits.”

Harry nodded and put on his coat and scarf before going to pick up the biscuit box and the two bottles of wine from the fridge.

They both exited their flat, and walked to the residence’s underground garage. They took Hermione’s car and drove to the Hordane’s house, talking quietly.

They both spent a quiet night with William Hordane and his wife, talking about their upcoming wedding. They had both agreed on a summer wedding. Hermione’s family and the Hordanes, who had all but adopted Harry, were both helping with the arrangements. They had five months left before the big day. No talk was made of their work or the wizarding world.

They parted a little before midnight. Hermione drove them back having been the one not drinking. They quietly climbed up to their flat.

Harry fumbled with the keys and froze as they heard some noise inside their flat.

Hermione and Harry looked at each other warily before stepping back to the lift as a crash and cursing were heard again in the flat.

Once in the lift, Harry turned to Hermione.

“I’m calling Carrington. I’m ready to bet that those people didn’t get the hint that we wanted no contact with them.”

The young woman was staring at the lift’s door, a frown marring her face.

“You do that, Harry. Tell him I’m in.”

The young man took out his phone and quietly dialled a number.

“Good evening sir, Judge Potter speaking.”

He paused a little.

“Sorry to bother you at this hour. However I think that people have broken in my flat.”

Another pause as the officer on the other end of the line asked him some questions.

“We heard some noise, voices as we were about to enter. There was no sign of breaking in so I think magic might be involved.”

“Alright, we will go to judge Hordane’s house until our flat is cleared.”

“Understood. Hermione also told me that she accepts your offer.”

“Alright, thank you sir.”

He turned to Hermione.

“Come on Mione. I’ll call Wiliam to warn him.”

Hermione shot him a look full of anger.

“He still wants me in his research’s team?”

“Of course, he does. You’ll have to go to his office tomorrow at 10 am. But are you sure, Mione?”

Her lips thinned.

“They broke in our home, Harry. They wanted to corner us. They took advantage of the fact that we can’t protect ourselves from magic. I’ll show them what Muggles can do.”

Harry smiled at her, placing his hand over hers on the wheel.

“They won’t know what hit them. But now you should calm down a little, it would not do to have an accident.”

“I know.... It’s just... They broke into our home, Harry! They probably looked through all our things! How can you be so calm?” she snapped.

Harry shook his head, his eyes growing cold.

“I need to keep a clear head Hermione. You know how rash I can be. But don’t worry, I’ll make sure it doesn’t go unpunished and I’m sure Wiliam will help.”

Hermione snorted.

“That’s for sure.”

Harry took out his phone and called the judge to warn him of their arrival. They finally reached the house of Harry’s mentor and saw him waiting for them in the doorway.

“Come in, you two, Mary is getting the guest room ready.”

Harry let his fiancée passed then closed the door behind him. Helping Hermione with her coat, he missed Mary coming down.

“Hermione, I’m so glad to see you’re both fine. When Wiliam told me what happened I was so scared...” Mrs Hordane caught her in a tight hug.

The young woman returned the hug with a smile.

"We're both alright. They just gave us a good scare. Fortunately they do not know how to be discreet and we heard them while Harry was looking for his key."

“The nerve of those people! Breaking in like that!”

Harry sighed.

"We don't have proof that's them. But it's quite the coincidence that the day they learn I'm still alive is the day someone trespass into our flat without ever needing to break the door or the lock...."

William clasped his shoulder.

“Do not worry. Between Carrington and me, we’ll set them straight. For now, we should all go to bed. Tomorrow will be a busy day.”

Harry sighed as Hermione leaned against him. He snaked his arms around her waist, trying to comfort her. She didn't show it, but he knew that, like him, what had just happened had shaken her.

They went to their respective bedrooms. However sleep eluded the younger couple for some time.

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Chapter 3: Fighting back

Morning came too soon to their tastes. Harry woke up to find Hermione coming back from the bathroom, having put the clothes they were wearing last night back on.

“We’ll need to get a change of clothes.”

Harry nodded.

“I’ll ask people to escort us back to our flat. I’m not taking chances with them.”

Hermione sighed.

“You’re right. Well, Mary told me she’ll have breakfast ready in ten minutes.”

Harry stood up and went to hug her, trying to comfort her.

“You know you don’t have to always be strong, Mione.”

She burrowed her head in his shoulder.

“I’m just so angry, Harry.”

The young man tightened his hold on her. For a minute, they both enjoyed each other’s presence.

“Come on, you should get ready or Mary will come and get us.”

Harry nodded and pushed some of her hair behind her ear.

“I’ll be quick. William should have already called Carrington to have people escort us home so we can get some clothes.”

Hermione gave him a quick kiss then left the room. He quickly put his clothes back on and joined his fiancée and the Hordanes for breakfast.

“Slept well, Harry?” asked the older man.

He rubbed his eyes.

“Not really, lots on my mind.”

Mary clucked disapprovingly.

“I’m not surprised. With that dreadful ordeal!”

William smiled indulgently at his wife.

“I called Carrington. A team will be there around 8.30 am. I must warn you that your flat is being investigated.”

Hermione finished eating her fruit then spoke up.

“Did they catch whoever was there?”

William shook his head.

“Unfortunately not. The moment the police entered your flat and announced themselves, cursing and seven popping sounds were heard.”

“Nobody was injured I hope?” asked Hermione.

“None, they all disappeared as soon as they realised it was the police. They have been screening your flat with the help of a Mugal - er - Muggle-born to find clues as to the culprits.”

Harry snorted as he drank his coffee.

“As if their Ministry will allow them to be prosecuted.”

William shrugged.

“You and I both know not much will come from this, but I don’t see anything wrong with making them sweat a bit.” He then shot Hermione an amused look. “And I’m sure that with our Hermione here

joining the research team we'll soon have something to block their magic or stop us from entering our homes."

Hermione bit vindictively into her pancake and nodded.

"You can count on it."

"Enough of this," said Mary, waving her wooden spoon. "This is breakfast and I don't want to hear you talk about work."

All of them smiled at her and the talks turned to lighter subjects.

They had barely finished eating that the doorbell rang in the house.

"That should be our escort," said William, standing up and folding his napkin.

"Bring them in for coffee. I'm sure you can spare a few minutes," stated his wife.

Harry looked at his mentor, surprise in his eyes.

"You are coming with us?"

"Of course."

The older man went to the front door and let in two men.

"Ah! Herman. So you'll be chaperoning us today."

The blond-haired man nodded.

"Exact Judge Hordane. Samuel Beckson here and I will escort you to Judge Potter's home and follow you today."

"Very good. You'll take some coffee while we all finish getting ready."

"Thank you Judge Hordane," answered the man as they were shown to the kitchen.

Half an hour later, they were driving from their flat back to their offices in a police car. Harry had to refrain from hitting something.

Apparently being magical did not make people be discreet. Thankfully they had not broken anything of value to the young couple.

Members of the scientific teams were still working around, looking for any clues about the trespassers' identities: prints, hairs, blood or saliva were being looked for.

Hermione and Harry quickly went to their bedroom, escorted by a policeman and packed a suitcase quickly.

As they got into the car once more, Harry turned to Hermione.

“Do you think we could get Carrington to have someone of the research teams look at our stuff for trackers?”

Hermione nodded.

“You can be sure I will do so.”

The rest of the journey to their office was spent with small talk. As soon as they arrived they were ushered upstairs.

Carrington's secretary motioned to them to go ahead while making shushing noise. They quickly understood why as they opened the door to the man's office.

“That the most twisted reasoning I've ever heard and trust me I've heard quite a lot!”

“We need him to kill You-know-who! The Prophecy...”

“You said yourself that woman was a fraud! How you can give any credence to her words, I will never understand.”

“That Prophecy was recorded in the Hall of Prophecies and has been proven to be true.”

“So what do you want to do? Pitch Judge Potter, someone without any of your fancy powers, against one of the most powerful wizards of the last century. Then wait and hope for the best!”

“The prophecy...”

“Here we like to have more assurance our plans will work; at least something more definite than words of a druggie!”

Hordane grimaced and knocked on the door’s sides before the shouting match could escalate into a physical one.

Carrington looked relieved upon seeing them.

“Doctor Granger, Judge Hordane, Judge Potter, thank you for coming.”

Harry shook his hand while looking at the people present.

There was that red-haired man from the day before, Weasley. He was sitting next to an ancient looking man with a long beard tucked in his belt, long white hair and dressed in a set of the ugliest robes Harry had ever seen.

Another man was pacing in front of Carrington and two others were standing in the back of the room, guards probably.

The ancient looking one stood up and walked to Harry, smiling and eyes twinkling.

“Mr Potter, I’m really happy to see you again.” He extended his hand to the younger man.

Harry looked at his hand and gave it the smallest of shake before letting go.

“I’m sorry, sir, but I do not believe we have ever met.”

The man’s smile widened.

“Of course, my boy, we were quite young when I last saw you. I’m Albus Dumbledore, Hogwarts’ Headmaster. I was the one who came by your aunt’s house to understand why you hadn’t received an entrance letter.”

Harry frowned.

“I’m sorry, sir. I don’t remember it.”

Dumbledore sighed.

“You were quite young, it’s understandable.” As Harry remained silent, he spoke up again. “I knew your parents quite well. It was quite disheartening to know that you wouldn’t be able to follow in their footsteps.”

The young judge shrugged.

“Well, Mr. Dumbledore, I don’t think this is relevant to the matter at hand.”

The old man didn’t seem deterred in the slightest and keep on smiling.

“Of course, of course. You’ll have to forgive me, my boy. Sometimes my mind likes to wander down memory lane... I’m sure we’ll be able to clear that little misunderstanding quickly.”

Harry stiffened.

“Pardon me, Mr. Dumbledore...”

“Call me Albus, my boy.”

“Mr. Dumbledore. First of all, I’ll ask you to please call me by my name. Then, I do not call coming home with my fiancée to find people having trespassed into our flat and waiting for us a misunderstanding.”

The old man’s smile dimmed a little.

“Harry...”

“Mr. Potter, if you would please, Mr. Dumbledore.”

“Mr. Potter, I’m sure you had nothing to fear from those people. You’ll have to understand that we have all suffered a lot from Voldemort.”

All the other wizards shivered, earning snorts from the Muggles present. Dumbledore carried on.

“They probably just wanted to talk with you and make you understand that you had to help.”

Anger shot up in Harry.

“Should they have wanted to talk, they could have asked for an appointment with my secretary. Ambushing Hermione and I, when they are the one able to enter and exit a building with a mere thought or petrify someone with a simple flick on their stick, do not settle well with me. And I’m sure you have laws against that.”

“You have to understand that the circumstances are different.”

“No I don’t, Mr. Dumbledore,” snapped Harry. “Your world was quite happy to forget I ever existed. I do not see what has changed...”

Carrington stepped in.

“Apparently, there is a prophecy that is said to talk of you and the Dark Lord and says that you will have the power he knows not and that neither her nor you can live while the other survive.”

Hermione’s lips tightened in distaste.

“So you’re saying that the wizarding world is looking up to my fiancé like some sort of the Messiah based on some vague cryptic poem.”

Carrington nodded, raking a hand in his hair.

“Exactly.”

She snorted.

“This is getting more and more unbelievable by the minute...”

The man that had been pacing spoke up.

“Now, see here, miss. We have been fighting a war for nearly a decade. A lot of good people have died and all of us want this conflict to end. If Mr. Potter here is the key to that war ending, then he will fight!” he spat.

Hordane walked to place himself between Harry and the man.

“Is that a threat, Mr...?”

Dumbledore immediately cut in.

“This is Minister Rufus Scrimgeour, Minister of Magic. And I’m sure Minister Scrimgeour didn’t mean to offend anyone.”

Scrimgeour looked about to say something but Dumbledore didn’t give him the time to.

“I’m sure Mr. Potter understands what is at stake and will do what is right for the greater good.”

Harry narrowed his eyes.

“While I understand perfectly what is at stake, I won’t let you manipulate me into sacrificing myself.”

“But it is your destiny to...”

“I will choose what my destiny will be made of, Mr Dumbledore and you will have no say in this choice.”

Harry turned to Carrington.

“I will be ready to help as much as I can the research teams and will carry on my work. Now if you’ll excuse me.”

“Mr. Potter...”

“Good day to you, Mr. Dumbledore.”

Harry walked to the door.

“Harry duck!”

He barely had the time to do so as a red beam hit the door’s frame.

He whirled around to see one of the wizards he had assumed were guards with his wand raised. Carrington was livid and Hermione had paled dramatically.

Everyone started to talk at the same time. Harry walked to Hermione and embraced her. He looked up, rage filling him.

“Silence!” he shouted. He turned to Carrington.

“Matthew, I trust you’ll deal with them. I’ll go back to my work.”

He turned to Scrimgeour.

“The only reason I’m not asking for a restrictive order against all wizards is because I know I’ll have to work with some on these cases. I will ask you to leave me alone.”

He left the room before anyone could speak.

Rufus Scrimgeour looked about to have an aneurysm, Weasley looked completely lost and Dumbledore simply stunned.

Hermione eyed them all.

“Harry might not be able to ask for an oath, being a Squib, but I can, no matter how untrained I am.” She turned to face the Minister. “I

want your oath, Minister. I want an oath on your Magic that no wizard will try to coerce us or attack us.”

Scrimgeour sneered.

“You have no right to ask that of me, Miss. That Squib will regret this.” He turned on his heels.

“Dumbledore, Weasley, I think our business here is done. Get the Portkey ready.”

Carrington steered forwards.

“Wait a moment. There is still the matter of the trespassing of Judge Potter’s flat. Do not think I forgot.”

Scrimgeour shrugged.

“I’ll hand the case to our Aurors.” He smirked. “But you will understand that with the war such a case is no priority and that any investigation might be delayed until the Aurors get enough time to look into it. Moreover trespassing into a Squib home is not that much of a crime according to our laws...”

Before Carrington could protest, the three wizards touched a bright orange sock and all disappeared.

Hermione looked at the spot where they all stood, grinding her teeth.

“I’ll show you what a Muggle can do.

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Hermione burst into Harry’s office.

“I did it, Harry! It worked!”

Harry looked up from the stack of papers he was reading over. It had been eight months since the wizards had first entered their life. To put

more pressure on Harry and get him to go back to the wizarding world, the Ministry of Magic had disclosed his location to the press.

Their life had become unliveable since then. Without taking into account the various hate-letters and what he had learnt were Howlers, there had been several attempts to get to him or Hermione by light and dark wizards alike. After a straight-out try at a kidnapping in the middle of the street, they had been placed under protective custody.

They had been living in their office's building for three months now and it was starting to get to Harry. They had been forbidden from going out, only allowed to warn their friends that they would be out of reach for an unknown time. Hermione hadn't been able to see her parents since then. The Grangers had also been sent abroad to protect them.

They had had to postpone their wedding, for fear the wizards would crash the events. Something that Harry would never forgive the Wizards for.

Harry tried to remember what his fiancée had been working on lately.

“What worked?”

Hermione hadn't been actively helping with the magical aspect of things, not having the time to learn seven years worth of knowledge in a few mere months. She had however been given a crash course in magical theory and spent three weeks holed up in her room pouring over thick dusty tomes.

She had then joined the research teams. Five months later they had made their first breakthrough and managed to block people or places from Magical scans using different frequencies, magnetic stones, crystals and an alloy of several metals.

Harry had been lost five minutes into her explanations.

For the past three months, her team had been working on a way to block Magical people from popping in a room as they willed.

He knew another team was trying to come up with a way to spot Magical people, another with ways to get around the wizards' shields. The most important team was dedicated to finding a way to negate magic.

Hermione gave him a wide smile. It nearly made the dark bags under her eyes and her paleness disappear.

“We found a way to block them!”

Harry got to his feet and hugged her.

“You know what that mean, Mione?”

She gave him a vindictive smile. She pulled away and went to sit in one of the armchair in his room. He went back to his chair.

“My parents and us can come back home.”

Harry hugged once more. He breathed deeply in her hair, trying not to eat any strand.

“How is it going for you?” she asked, leaning her head on his shoulder.

“We’re getting closer to them every day. But we will need several more months to train the recruits of the MCS and produce the new equipments.”

“MCS?”

“Magic Control Squads. All the recruits are Squibs, Muggle-Borns witches or wizards that chose to leave the Wizarding world behind.”

“Not that original... And how is it going with the Ministry.”

“Tiptaddle has been fooled easily and has been reporting what we wanted him to report.”

“And on the wizard’s front?”

"No changes, both sides have been holing themselves in their quarters after that last battle at Hogsmeade two months ago. Our contacts have informed us that Voldemort is regrouping and is currently courting the Vampires clans from Eastern Europe. They also told us of an increase in Potion ingredients orders on both sides. Several people disappeared in the area where Voldemort has set up his Headquarters and we all know what that means..."

“Rituals...”

“Yes. We evacuated the whole area using the excuse of a toxic leak and quarantined it.”

“The labs will start to produce the blocks tomorrow and we will start spreading them around, starting with the more sensitive areas.”

“What about the wizards in your teams?”

“Those they were deliberately slowing us down were sent back. The few that genuinely showed interest were evaluated and have been helping us. However from the Ministry of Magic’s point of view those researches have been ended and you can imagine how much they gloated about that...”

“I can imagine...” He twirled his pen in his hand. “Come on. Let’s tell Carrington the good news.”

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Harry looked at Carrington, a stunned expression on his face.

“Flies, Harry, flies.” Hermione was smiling at him.

Carrington and Hordane smiled at the couple.

“So, Harry, what do you think?”

The young man leant back in his chair.

“Are you serious?” he asked, looking from his mentor to Carrington.

“Completely serious. The Queen and the Prime Minister have been asking that such a unit be created for a month already.”

“B-But, why me?”

“Why not? You are young enough to have the energy needed to lead such a unit. You are no stranger to taking difficult decision and are intelligent and level-headed enough for such a task. Of course, you would still answer to me.”

Harry shook his head.

“But I don’t know anything about magic...”

Carrington shook his head.

“That’s why your fiancée will co-lead this team with you. Any other argument?”

Harry crossed his arms, a mulish look on his face.

“About a dozen, but I’m ready to bet that you have answers prepared for every single one of them...”

Hordane laughed.

“And you would win. But joking aside my boy, you and Hermione really are the best ones for this.”

Carrington smirked as he took out a large envelope from his drawer.

“And as I knew you would make a fuss, I had a talk with the Prime Minister...”

He handed Harry the envelope and smiled as his young colleague looked as if the piece of paper would bite him.

Hermione raised an eyebrow.

“So are you going to open it today or not?”

Carefully cutting it open, paling a little upon seeing the crest and realizing who it was that was sending the letter. Harry took out a piece of expensive parchment. He read it and glared at the man in front of him.

“That’s a low blow, Matthew. As if I could say no to the Queen!”

Hermione laughed.

“He got you there. But it wasn’t like you would have said no.”

Harry shrugged.

"Of course not, but that did not mean I wouldn't have been able to make them sweat a little..."

They all laughed at that.

“So Harry, Hermione, I take it that I’ll have some paperwork to do?”

They both nodded.

“Wonderful!”

"And pray tell what is the use of leaving you the times and places of suspected attacks if you are not going to act on those pieces of information." Harry massaged his temples, not missing the smirk Carrington was shooting him.

He would get him back for having made him deal with those idiots.

You're the only one with enough patience for this, Harry he said. He would give him patience!

“We have no men to waste on investigating Muggle leads.”

Harry took a deep breath.

“How many attacks did we warned you of?”

The Auror in front of him, Dawlish if he remembered correctly, shrugged.

“I don’t know, seven or eight.

“Ten to be precise,” cut Harry. “And how many of those warnings turned out to be real attacks.”

The Auror looked down, face growing red.

“I don’t know. I don’t concern myself with trivialities like this...”

Harry had to refrain from throwing his paperweight at him.

“Nine out ten turned out to be real attacks.”

“Maybe, but...”

“Then why did you not act upon us informing you of the attack in Canterbury!”

Dawlish looked on him with a sneer.

“We couldn’t spare any men and none of our spies had heard of an attack there.”

“They are doing a fine job then.”

“I certainly trust them more than coward Squibs or Muggles.”

Harry clenched his pen so tight he heard the plastic break.

“Then you’ll be interested to know your inaction caused the death of ten Magical people. When we evacuated our citizens, they refused to leave, saying that the Ministry would have told them had they been in any danger.”

“You are the reason those people are dead, Squib. If you had done as you were told...”

“I would be dead and Voldemort would still be here.”

“The Prophecy...”

“Pray tell what kind of power does a Squib possess?”

Harry smirked as he watched the Auror try to find a good answer.

“Prophecies are never wrong.”

Harry snorted.

“Forgive me for wanting to live but I’ll pass.”

“You’re just a coward, Squib,” sneered Dawlish.

“And you wonder why I don’t want to work with you...” Harry stood up and pointed to the door. “I don’t think we have anything more to say to each other.”

The Auror stood up and motioned to the bald black wizard who had remained silent the whole time to follow. Harry had already met him a few times and found him to be one of the most bearable wizards he had encountered. Dawlish left without sparing anyone a glance, chin stuck up.

The two wizards left the room and Harry slumped in his chair and gladly accepted the glass Carrington handed him the moment the wizards were out.

“Thank God for alcohol,” sighed Harry as he took a sip of his scotch.

“Here.”

Harry raised his glass.

“To the wizards and their stupidity,” he said in a mock toast.

“I must say they reached a new high today,” agreed Carrington.

A sharp knock on the door surprised them.

“Enter,” said Harry, wondering who could be coming.

The black wizard entered and closed the door behind him. Harry and Carrington did not hide their confusion upon his return.

“Mr. Potter, Mr. Carrington, Auror Shacklebolt, we already met.”

Carrington shook his hand.

“We did, is there a problem?”

Shacklebolt let out a mirthless laugh.

“What is not a problem, Mr. Carrington?” He sobered quickly. “I have little time as Dawlish is waiting for me.”

“We’re listening,” said Harry, leaning forwards.

“As you I’m an Auror, but I’m also a member of the Order of the Phoenix.”

Harry raised his hand.

“I’m stopping you right now, Auror Shacklebolt. If it is another attempt of Mr. Dumbledore to coerce me back to the wizarding world then I must ask you to leave. I would have thought the man would have gotten the hint after last time.”

Shacklebolt smiled.

“He got it. I think that having a Howler shouting NO in four languages following for a whole day made a point. I must say nothing worked on it and believe me he tried to.”

Harry crossed his arms, feeling satisfied.

“It was a product of the cooperation between Muggle and Magical means. But you didn’t come to discuss this little piece of revenge I think.”

“Indeed not. Even if the Ministry is stupid to ignore your help, not all of us agree with this decision. Dumbledore thus asked me to give you this box.”

He pulled it out of his pocket and restored it to his real size.

Harry eyed it with suspicion.

“How does it work and how can I be sure it is not a way to trick me back?”

“You place a paper in it and it will vanish to reappear to the sister box that stands in the Headmaster’s office at Hogwarts. It works both ways. We will be grateful for any piece of information you’ll give us.”

Shacklebolt paused a little and looked at Harry.

“I will give you my word that this is the only function of this box. Do what you want with it.”

Harry eyed him suspiciously before nodding.

“I will hold you to it, Auror Shacklebolt.”

The man nodded and after bidding them a good day hurried out.

Carrington stood up and walked to the desk, eyeing the box.

“Have your fiancée check it out before using it.”

Harry nodded, rolling his eyes.

“As if I would do otherwise...”

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Harry and several other members of the Department of Magic Control looked down at the mock-fighting going on before them.

“Looks like the new equipments are holding up,” said Hordane.

“They are,” stated Hermione looking up from one of the computers.

"They better, given how much they cost," mumbled a man behind him.

Hermione fortunately didn't catch it.

“As you can see, we have come up with devices that forbid any type of magical travel save flying on broom. We also came up with various shields against magic. None of them will work on the Unforgivable though we are still working on finding a solution.”

She pointed to several soldiers doing target practice on dummies surrounded by bubbles of different colours.

“We also found a way to make our weapons pierce a magical shield.”

She then motioned to a tall man.

“I’m Dean Thomas, a Muggle-Born wizard. On this table, you can see classical army’s equipments. All of them are Magic-proof and will be able to work no matter the magical saturation.”

He gestured towards a strange device. It looked like a steel spider with hundreds of tiny crystals imbedded in it. As Harry looked closer, he noticed that all those crystals had microscopic engravings on them.

“This is magic Nullifier. The strongest we managed to create was able to block magic in a radius of ten metres.”

A man cut the wizard.

“Excuse me but why don’t we create stronger versions of this to spread around and magical inhibitors for ever witch and wizard. This would be a sure way to deal with this problem.”

A silence followed his words. Hermione was the one to break it.

“I’m glad to see that you condone genocide, Defence Secretary.”

The man looked at her visibly startle.

“What do you mean Doctor Granger?”

“Simply that by going along with your plan not only would we make all magical fauna and flora disappear but we would exterminate every single magical beings.”

“Care to elaborate, Doctor.”

“Of course, Prime Minister.” She took a deep breath, a bit intimidated to speak to one of the most powerful men in England. “Magical beings, be they sentient or not are just that, Magical. They need Magic to live just as we need air, water or food. Cutting them from magic would be like depriving us of air. The more magical a creature, the quicker she would die. A Unicorn would not survive five minutes, nor would a phoenix. A Pegasus or kneazle would survive maybe a day.”

The prime minister nodded.

“Alright, bit how does that work for wizards? As far as I know they are still human unless you have something to tell us, Doctor.”

Hermione smiled.

“Wizards and witches are humans. We haven’t been able to find out what allow us to perform magic. Our main hypothesis is that they carry a magical gene we could say.”

She paused a little.

“But that’s not today’s problem. Magical inhibitors might work without damages or long term consequences on babies or toddlers. It would block the expansion of their core and said core would then destroy itself from disuse.”

“So why can’t we-”

Hermione frowned.

“I would thank to let me finish my explanation, Defence Secretary.”

“As I said it would work for toddler or babies. To use it on anyone older than 2 year-old would be tantamount to torture.”

She looked at the Defence Secretary with a smirk.

“What would happen if I took out your liver, Mr Sullivan?”

The man shrugged.

“I would die. But I don’t see how this is relevant.”

“As they grow up, a wizard’s body grows more and more accustomed to magic. Magic ingrains itself deeper and deeper in all the body’s functions. By the age of seventeen, they need magic to function. Should they be cut off from it, their body will start to shut down.”

“What about teenagers?” asked a woman.

“Hypothetically speaking, they could be cut from magic since it is not fully set in them yet. However it would be more painful than anything you can imagine and there would be no guarantee that they would come out of it whole and sane.”

Carrington stepped forwards.

“Thank you for your explanations, Doctor Granger. Defence Secretary Sullivan, I’m sure you’ll understand why this solution was never considered.”

The man nodded.

“When will the squads be operational?” he said looking at Harry.

“They’ll only need one more month.”

A stout man dressed in a dark suit with a bright green and yellow tie frowned.

“But are we sure they’ll be enough faced with real wizards?”

Harry shook his head.

“I don’t think they could take a real wizard one on one. But a whole squad with the right back up has enough up its sleeve to deal with a large number of wizards.”

The Prime Minister looked back to the squads training bellow them in the large arena that had been built under their office building.

“You all know that the situation is dire. If we do not want to disclose the truth of Magic, something we’ll have to be done before the end of the year. We can’t afford a new wave of casualties.”

Harry nodded.

“The number of casualties has really gone down with the blocks on magical travel. Our contacts have told us that Voldemort thinks Dumbledore warded the places and Dumbledore thinks that a rogue team is protecting the Muggles.”

“Let them think what they want to. It’s not like they would believe we could be able to defend ourselves.”

Carrington smiled darkly.

“Let their blindness be their downfall then.”

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Harry watched the spectacle provided by the wizards. Had the situation not been so dire, he would have found it hilarious.

On the left side you had the Ministry officials not affiliated with Dumbledore. In the middle, you could find the Dumbledore supporters and the members of the Order of the Phoenix. On the right side, a little isolated from the others were seated the darker supporters of the Light sides.

Harry had heard them being called Slytherins with such distaste he had asked Hermione what that meant. Upon understanding being that dislike he had snorted at the wizards' stupidity.

Honestly, ostracizing a whole group of wizards because they had been sorted in a house labelled dark due to the actions and thoughts of a man dead for centuries...

Harry eyed them with a keen eye. He knew they were only following Dumbledore because they thought he would be the one winning and did not doubt that all of them had plans in place should the tides turn in Voldemort's favour.

However there was one point they all agreed on: ignoring the Muggles and Squibs.

Harry had come at Dumbledore's request after having the man swear an oath that he and his companions would be able to leave whenever he wished as the meeting would be held in Hogwarts.

Finally the Ministry officials stood up and left in a huff when it became clear that Dumbledore would not bow down to Scrimgeour's decisions.

Hermione leant on him.

“There are hopeless, aren’t they?”

Harry smiled.

“Makes you glad you left them, doesn’t it?”

Hermione nodded.

“Yes.” She frowned, recalling her time in Hogwarts.

Harry squeezed her hand.

“You are the strong one, Hermione. Never think otherwise.” He looked at the wizards and witches. “Please remind me why we came?”

Hermione gave him a small smile.

“To promote Muggle-Magical relations?”

Harry shook his head.

“No I mean the real reason.”

“To see wizards make arse of themselves.”

“I know I should have brought popcorn.”

Hermione rolled her eyes.

“Be nice, Harry.”

Harry brought his attention back to the situation at hand. It seems that Dumbledore was taking the situation back in hand, having stunned and silenced Black.

Now, that was a wizard Harry had come to dislike for purely personal reasons.

First the man put revenge before taking of his orphaned fifteen-month-old godson. Then, he escaped and spent a year trying to catch Pettigrew, not once trying to contact him. After being captured by Snape and barely escaping the kiss, he finally decided on making a sensible decision and contacted Dumbledore.

A questioning under Veritaserum was all it took to convince the old man who then sent him back on Wormtail's trail.

It would take two more years for him to get the rat and be able to prove his innocence.

And did he ever thought of looking for his godson?

NO!

Then after being cleared by the Ministry, he finally learnt the truth about his status of a Squib.

And what did the man do?

Contact him?

Get custody?

At least take an interest in his life?

Well, after a few days in denialland, the man simply relinquished his status of Godfather, unable to deal with the fact that his best friend's son wasn't a wizard. Harry had to say that it had hurt to receive that notice. It had hurt even more to learn from Dean that Sirius Black had apparently taken a guy called Longbottom under his wing.

And he had had the gall to waltz in Harry's life, fully expecting the young man to welcome him.

He was broken from his reverie by Dumbledore's amplified voice shouting for Silence.

Ears ringing, he shot a glare at the man.

"These disputes have to cease at once. Divided we will fall, United we will stand strong!"

Harry snorted, as did Carrington, Hermione, William and the three others that had come with them.

“Hogwart’s wards have been reinforced and all the students were evacuated to American schools save for those falling under the Ministry’s conscription’s criteria. We all know that Voldemort will attack here and we need to prepare.”

Followed two hours of plans during which Harry and his companions were never asked to participate. They however took notes, already adapting their own plans.

The meeting was coming to an end when a thin dark-haired man with swallow skin spoke up.

“And what of Voldemort?”

All the eyes turned to Dumbledore.

“Severus, you know the words of the Prophecy as well as I do.”

The man sneered.

“Indeed, Headmaster, thus my question.” The man answered, shooting a glare Harry’s way. “Has Potter finally accepted his role?”

Dumbledore gave him a smile.

“I’m sure Mr. Potter will do what is right.”

Everyone turned to look at Harry who seemed to be completely engrossed in his papers.

Silence fell on the room.

“Mr. Potter?” asked Dumbledore.

Harry did not look up.

“Mr. Potter?” This time his tone was a bit more insistent and Hermione elbowed her fiancée in the ribs.

He looked up, rubbing his side.

“You were talking to me?” He said looking at Dumbledore whose twinkle was starting to fade.

“I do not think there is another Mr. Potter around.”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“You’ll have to forgive me, headmaster. I don’t think I’m fit for the role of the innocent sacrificial lamb. But I’m sure you have come up with another way.”

Dumbledore’s twinkle definitively disappeared.

“Mr. Potter. This is no joking matter and it is your fate to fight...”

“My fate is my own to choose. And who said anything about me fighting?”

Many of those present looked at him bewildered. Even Dumbledore seemed unsettled.

“Well, since you’re here, I’ve assumed that...”

“We have a phrase that says ‘Never assume, it makes an ass out of you and me’. I have received no training in the way of fighting so won’t come even close of the battleground. I would only be a distraction and a hindrance to the fighters.”

“How can you say that, Harry! Your parents would have fought!” shouted Black.

Harry eyed him coldly.

“Unfortunately, Mr. Black, my parents are dead. However I think they would have wanted me to live, even if I’m a Squib.”

“Harry, that’s not what I meant,” whined the man.

Harry raised an eyebrow.

"I think that was exactly what you meant. As it is clear that you refuse to believe that Muggles might play their part during the battle"

Some of the wizards present snorted and laughed at him. Dumbledore smiled at him.

“Mr. Potter, you can’t really think that Muggles have a part to play. You said so yourself, they do not have the skills required.”

It was not the words that got to Harry but the tone that was used. He stood up, followed by all those that had come with him.

“I couldn’t have said it better, Mr. Dumbledore. We will then take our leave.”

He saw several wizards stood up and shot a look at Dumbledore.

“I believe we had an agreement, Mr. Dumbledore.”

The old man motioned to the others to sit down.

"Indeed, Mr. Potter," he sighed. "I can only hope that you will come to terms with your fate and realize that this is for the greater good."

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“The greater good of whom?”

Chapter 4: A Squib Worth

Harry leant back in his chair, watching the three screens showing the battle taking place on the Hogwarts' grounds.

The battle of Hogwarts was finally taking place.

He was currently sitting in the commanding room at the base that had been built at the edge of the Hogwarts' wards.

For the past months they had been gathering their troops their and sending them on small hit and run missions in the nearby area, mainly targeting the smaller Death Eater camps.

His attention was drawn to the left screen showing a view from Hogwarts' Astronomy tower. They had a team set up that drone there two days before. The wizards were so blind as far as Muggle were concerned that they had never thought of adjusting their wards to them.

The two sides had been battling for about an hour already and both sides had sustained some casualties but not enough to tilt the balance in favour of one of them.

Voldemort had also yet to appear, but Dementors had arrived. That seemed to give an advantage to the Dark side until a Patronus ward was erected causing them to flee.

Harry turned to Carrington.

“Are all the teams ready?”

The older man nodded.

“They are and are waiting for your signal.”

Harry looked back at the screen and shook his head.

“Not yet. We still don’t know where the Vampires and Werewolves are.” He paused, going over their plan while looking at the right

screen what showed an aerial view of the area, Dumbledore's forces appearing in blue dots while Voldemort's follower were in red.

That had been a clever piece of magic coupled to complete overhaul of a satellite and computer program.

Finally the Werewolves and Vampires attacked as did the Centaurs.

Harry turned to the telecommunication officers.

“Let the Snitches out”

Immediately, the two men started to talk.

“Snitch 1, Snitch 2, status report.”

“Snitch 1 ready.”

“Snitch 2 ready.”

“Merlin to Snitches, permission to take off, orders will follow.

“Roger Merlin. Snitch 1 taking off.”

“Roger Merlin. Snitch 2 taking off.”

Harry looked at Hermione.

“Send them the orders and targets.”

They heard the twelve fighters pass above them and reported their attention back to the screens.

“Have the Dragons and Badgers ready to go.”

Five minutes the fighters made a first sweep over the battle ground.

“Have the Snitches fire.”

The officers immediately transmitted the orders and the planes dove for the ground.

Harry watched on the screen as the werewolves were decimated by the silver laden bullets and small bombs. The Vampires did not fare much better. Hermione and the other searcher had managed to come up with semi intelligent missiles that would lock on the rather unique magical signature of a Vampire and explode in flames upon impact. They were also impervious to magical shields. Death Eaters started to aim for the planes to no avail thanks to the shields that had been created for that occasion.

The fighters rose in the air before diving once more only to be met with Dementors. Ten of them launched themselves on one of the aircraft.

“Harvis, permission to Fergusson for Patronus 1 and 2” He peered at the right screen then the middle one that was made of ten little screens showing different views of the grounds.

“Bailey, get the Badgers and Dragons moving.”

Meanwhile the pilot had tried to shake the Dementors off to no avail and was starting to feel the effects of those blasted creatures. As his flight was getting more and more erratic, Harry could only hope that he would hold on.

Two detonations were heard followed by two louder one and their three screens went white for several seconds.

“It worked!” squealed Hermione as her fellow scientists and the wizards sitting next to her pumped their fists in the air and high-fived each other.

“Have the Snitches report.”

A few seconds passed as the two officers received information from the twelve fighters.

“Snitch 2.3 needs repairs, all the others have used about tree fourth of the vampire munitions,” stated Harvis

“All Snitches 1 are accounted for, about two thirds of the munitions used,” added Bailey.

Harry looked back at the screen, biting his lip.

“Have Snitch 2.3 land on Helga’s Base and have Ramirez go to the medics. All the other Snitches carry on.”

Harvis and Bailey immediately started to speak.

Carrington smiled at Harry.

“So how are you feeling?”

“Like that man is going to pummel me,” answered Harry, motioning to a tall man behind them.

“Don’t mind Goeffrey. As a Commanding Officer he’s just sore his troops are being directed by a civilian.”

Harry rolled his eyes.

“As if I had any choice. I’ll like to see him refuse an order from the Queen.”

Carrington laughed.

“You must agree that it’s the only way we can fulfil that Prophecy.”

Harry snorted.

“Come on, Matthew! You have to agree that the muggle army being the power Voldemort knows not is funny.”

Carrington’s smile widened.

“I find it fitting.”

They both turned their attention back to the screens.

The transporters and helicopters arrived at the battle area and their troops engaged the Death Eaters.

After several minutes of stupor, Dumbledore and the Ministry's fighters joined them as the Death Eaters grew more and more aggressive as they felt the tide of the battle turn against them.

Harry was looking closely to the screens, having left the management of the battle to the Commanding Officer. He was looking for any signs of the Dark Lord's presence, trying not to wince as some of their men cried out in pain or shouted for medical assistance as their comrades were wounded.

Orders were shouted left and right as the fight intensified

“Sir! Powerful Magical signal approaching!” signalled a man.

“Zoom on it.”

The middle screen shifted to show blurry black shape approaching quickly from the forest. Whoever it was, it was followed by four other wizards.

“Is it him? Hermione?”

She was typing like mad on her computer.

The figure started to fire spells around and wreaking havoc, forcing their troops in the defensive.

“Hermione!”

She shot him an exasperated look.

“It’s not that easy to get a clear Magical signature in Magic saturated atmosphere you know!” She typed a few more keys. “Got you!” she cried out as a series of coloured waves appeared on her screen.

“Hermione, is it him?!” Harry was growing more and more anxious as the figure in black seemed to galvanize the Death Eaters by its mere presence. He had little doubts but needed to be sure.

She clicked a few times.

“Positive match at ninety-nine percents.”

Harry immediately walked to a microphone.

“Raise the wards. Open a line to the Bolts,” he barked.

He waited a few seconds for the line to open.

“Merlin to Bolts, status report.”

“Bolt 1 in position.”

“Bolt 2 in position.”

“Bolt 3 in position.”

“Target has appeared, permission given to terminate the target by all means. Code 311081. Coordinates and magical signature are being sent.”

“Roger that Merlin, target localized, Bolt 1 out.”

Bolt 2 and 3 followed.

“Merlin to Phoenix. Code 311081. Permission to strike.”

“Roger that Merlin, Phoenix out.”

Harry shifted to a broad radio channel.

“To all units, Operation Lightning starting. Activate protective equipment.”

Meanwhile Carrington had their protections raised.

They all waited with bated breath as seven missiles came into view and exploded above the battle ground, letting out a complex magnetic wave and blinding the screen for several seconds.

They heard shootings and a high pitched scream before the image came back.

The black figure was on the ground, apparently convulsing. All the wizards around were down, knocked out.

“Bolt 1 to Merlin, Target hit.”

“Bolt 2 to Merlin, Target missed.”

“Bolt 3 to Merlin, Target hit.”

Harry motioned to the Commanding Officer to take the commands back; something the man hurried to do.”

The young man went to sit down. It seemed quite an anti-climatic end to the battle.

All it had taken to fell one of the most feared Dark Lord had been three snipers and magic nullifying bullets... Carrington had walked to him.

“Come on, Potter, you need to finish this.”

Harry walked to microphone.

“To all the Units. Operation Lightning is closed and succeeded. Gather every wounded and casualties for transport. Round all Death Eaters for transfer to the detainment cells and permission to fold back to base. Congratulations all of you. Merlin out.”

The young man stretched and looked at the Commanding Officer.

"Thank you for your cooperation, Commanding Officer Grant. I'll leave the situation in your capable hands. No contact is to be permitted with the prisoners and their wands are to be confiscated. One of the wizards working with us will have to check them for shape shifting abilities before detention."

"Yes, Judge Potter. Doctor Granger gave us detailed instruction as to how the prisoners would have to be handled and all our men were thoroughly briefed."

“Good. Thank you again.”

They all shook hands before the civilians left the military to the clean up.

As they left the area to reach the jet that would take them back to London, Harry couldn't help but look back.

“Something wrong, Harry?” asked Hermione.

He shook his head.

“No, it’s just hard to believe it’s over now.”

Hermione smiled.

“But it is.”

Harry returned her smile.

“Indeed. It’ll be strange to go back to a normal life.”

Hermione squeezed his hand and kissed his cheek.

“I’m sure we’ll manage.”

Harry stretched lazily and tried to work out a kink in his neck.

He nearly moaned in delight when he felt someone massaged his neck and stiff shoulders.

“Whoever you are, don’t stop.”

“Should I be worried, Harry?” the person behind breathed in his ear.

Smiling he turned to face her and gave her a light kiss on her lips.

“Never Hermione...” He kissed her once more, this time a bit more heatedly.

“Hem, hem.”

They both turned sharply towards the door, feeling both like teenagers caught snogging in a cupboard.

Upon seeing Carrington and William they both relaxed.

“Don’t scare us like this, Matthew...” said Harry, motioning them to sit down as Hermione went to perch herself on the corner of his desk.

William eyed the stacks of papers on his desk.

“Is it the Lestrange’s case?”

Harry nodded with a sigh.

“Yes, that was the last trial. She really was a twisted bitch. I wouldn’t have wanted to be her lawyer...”

“What did he plead?”

“Insanity. Not that far from the truth when you think about it.” He rubbed his eyes. “I gave the verdict an hour ago. Life sentence in High Security quarters without right of parole. The Lestrange estate will be divided between her victims as compensations.”

He looked at Carrington.

“By the way, I’ve been wondering where you’re putting all the sentenced Death Eaters... I don’t think a simple cell will stop them.”

Carrington raked a hand in his hair.

“Don’t remind me. You can’t imagine the shouting that went on when we debated this issue... Some were all for reinstating the Death Penalty. Others wanted to chuck them in a warded dungeon cell and throw away the key, only coming once a day with stale bread and murky water...” He rolled his eyes before carrying on his explanations.

“The Ministry of Magic kindly offered the use of the Azkaban prison and of their Dementors. But first we didn’t trust them to keep them locked up for good; and second that prison is breaking every laws or treaties regarding the handling of prisoners.”

Hermione shivered.

“The things I heard were the stuff of nightmares indeed.”

Carrington nodded.

“It is. In the end, we have built a specialized wing in several prisons as to not gather them all in the same place. Their wands were broken. Their cells and the whole prisons are warded against all magical travel and possess the necessary facilities. They are fed three times a day, clothed and given the necessities. They’re even taken out one at a time for a one hour walk once a week.”

“Better than what they deserve,” muttered Hermione.

William shrugged.

“Maybe Hermione, but we won’t stoop to their level.”

Harry smiled a little and turned to Carrington.

“How is it going with the wizards?”

“Dumbledore and Scrimgeour are giving me headaches but they can’t do much with those shields. So they’re resorting to the age old manipulations, blackmail techniques and bribes.”

Harry shrugged.

“I think it’s high time the Wizarding World leaves the Middle Ages, even if I don’t think either world is ready to accept the other. But you know what, I don’t care. After all of this, I’ll be glad to never hear of the Wizarding World.”

Carrington smiled.

“You did your part and then more. Leave the rest to politicians. But you know that there’s a high probability that any children you got might be magical.”

Harry nodded and took Hermione’s hand

“We know. Hermione has accepted the proposition from the Prime Minister and is quietly working with the Education Department to create a whole curriculum for those with Magical abilities that will offer a double education. Should we have a child with such abilities, he or she will attend that school.”

Hermione squeezed his hand back.

“True, but we are still young.”

William chuckled.

“It might come sooner than you thought it would. By the way have you finally decided on a date?”

Harry simply handed them a creamy envelope each.

“You’re cordially invited to the wedding of Harry James Potter and Hermione Jane Granger on the 13th of June...” read out loud Matthew Carrington.

“You and your family are invited of course and we’re keeping our fingers crossed that the sun will be with us.”

“Speaking of ceremony I hope you got some formal clothing ready.”

Harry frowned.

Carrington smiled.

"You didn't think the Queen wouldn't honour us?" He laughed at Harry, seeing his dumbfounded expression. "You can expect an invitation to an award Ceremony at the Palace in the coming week."

Harry looked at Hermione, panic rising in him.

"But... I-She-We... I've nothing to wear!" he stuttered.

Hermione rolled her eyes.

“One word, Harry. Shopping”

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Hermione tightened his hold on Hermione as he twirled her around the waxed floor of the Palace's ballroom.

She chuckled and leant forwards.

“You’re doing fine, Harry.”

He rolled his eyes, trying not to lose count of his steps. From the corner of his eye, he could see William Hordane and his wife as well as the Carringtons waltzing too.

The music came to an end and Harry made Hermione on the side before bowing to her as she curtsied.

He took the hand that carried her engagement ring and kissed it before leading her to the sides where they were met with the other members of their Department.

The award ceremony had taken place earlier in the evening. Harry remembered walking up to the Queen, his heart beating wildly. His memory was a little fuzzy of the speech that followed until he walked back to Hermione's side amidst a loud clapping from the crowd and flashes from cameras nearly blinding him. A grand dinner had then been organized. There had been so many knives, forks and spoon that Harry had had trouble remembering which to use and had finally relied on Hermione to spare himself from embarrassment.

They had then been ushered to a magnificent ballroom where a small orchestra was playing. The royal family had opened the Ball, quickly joined by other couples.

Hermione smiled at him as he brought her a cup of champagne. Harry to say she looked gorgeous in the lavender gown, and from the looks she had drawn, he wasn't the only thinking so.

They both stood up and mingled through the crowd, stopping to talk with a few people.

"Miss Granger, Mr. Potter."

Harry sighed, recognizing the voice as he turned around.

"Yes, Mr. Dumbledore?"

The old man had obviously been dressed. Harry had to admit that seeing him in a grey costume with a simple blue dress shirt was strange, though easier on the eyes. He was accompanied by a woman dressed in traditional Scottish garb, her tartan shawl covering her shoulder. If Harry remembered correctly it was McGonagall, his Deputy at Hogwarts. Scrimgeour was also with them, his assistant whose name Harry had never bothered to learn standing behind them.

"You seem in good health."

Harry nodded.

"Indeed, I hope the same can be said for yours."

“It can, Mr. Potter, but I must congratulate you and Miss Granger on your awards.”

Harry and Hermione shared a smile.

“Thank you, Mr. Dumbledore. However what is truly important is that Voldemort can no longer hurt any of our worlds.”

He didn’t miss the shuddering of the two others. He had always loved to shake the wizards by saying his name...

“True, true...” stated Dumbledore. He looked straight in Harry’s eyes until Hermione got her fiancé’s attention back by squeezing his arm. “I’m sure you have many plans now the threat to our world has been dealt with.”

“Indeed.”

Dumbledore waited for him to elaborate but Harry wasn’t going to make things easy for him.

Scrimgeour was the first one to break the silence.

“We came to offer you a place at the Ministry, Mr. Potter.”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“Why would you offer a Squib such a position? I’m sure they are quantity of far more... worthy people.”

Scrimgeour’s jaw tightened.

“We are going through difficult times. A lot of changes are...”

Hermione cut him.

“Those changes are ones that are needed.”

Scrimgeour’s eyes narrowed.

“You are speaking of changes to a centuries-old institution that was working perfectly well, Miss Granger. An institution you have absolutely no knowledge of.” He paused and obviously tried to control his temper. “What I mean is that the Ministry could use the support of the one to defeat You-know-who.”

Harry chuckled.

“In not as many words you need a poster boy, Minister.” He shook his head. “I’ll have to refuse your kind offer, Minister. I have no interest in the magical world and its citizens.”

Scrimgeour’s face coloured a little.

“You should think a bit more about this, Mr. Potter. After all you wouldn’t want to deprive your future children of your legacy because of a hasty decision.”

Harry’s face hardened.

“You will find it unwise to threaten me, minister.”

Dumbledore spoke up trying to diffuse the situation.

“I’m sure Minister Scrimgeour meant no offence.”

Harry made an unbelieving face at the man.

“I’m sure he did, Mr. Dumbledore. Now, if that will be all...”

“You should rethink your decision, Mr. Potter. There are a lot of people in the magical world that knew your parents really well and would love to meet and learn to know you.”

Harry’s face closed immediately.

“They had more than twenty years to do so, Mr. Dumbledore. You’ll forgive me if I think that this sudden change of heart if nothing but interested.”

“Your godfather...”

Harry raised his hand.

“That... man lost any right over me a long time ago.”

"He made some hasty choices... Surely you can understand his position and forgive him. Family should always prevail."

Harry snorted.

“Of course, but he was never family.”

"I can assure you he's been regretting this deeply."

The young man shook his head.

“It’s too little, too late.” He straightened himself. “Now, I don’t think we have anything else to talk about, Mr. Dumbledore.”

Harry took Hermione's arm and started to lead her away from the two men.

“Mr. Potter...”

They ignored him and walked away, Harry's arm around her waist. Dumbledore sighed, regret filling him as he watched the young couple.

The old man closed his eyes. He wondered what might have been had he made a different choice that day, years ago and believed in a Squib's worth.

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